



Fact Sheet

Agricultural Burning

Butte County Air Quality
Management District
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www.bcaqmd.org

What is Agricultural Burning?

The open burning of vegetative materials produced from the commercial growing and harvesting of crops or raising of animals. Agricultural waste burning also includes prescribed burning – fires deliberately set and carefully controlled for the health of an ecosystem. Agricultural burning is regulated by the local, State and federal fire protection agencies and the Butte Air Quality Management District (District). Agricultural growers must be in possession of both a valid fire protection agency-issued burn permit and an Air Quality Burn permit (District-issued) in order to be eligible to burn.

The District has had regulations governing agricultural burning since the 1970's. Rules such as burn hours and drying times, which specify how long material must be cut or felled before it is burned, were established as part of the initial regulations. In December 2010, the District's Governing Board adopted new open burning regulations (Rule 300) which require all types of burning to follow the burn hours and drying time requirements. These requirements, as well as additional requirements for residential burning, became effective on March 1, 2011. For additional information, please visit our website at www.bcaqmd.org.

What Are the Agricultural Burning Rules?

The Air Quality Burn Permit issued by the District outlines the requirements set forth by the District; information such as burn hours, prohibited materials, and reporting procedures are provided in the permit. By signing the District's Air Quality Burn Permit, the permit holder agrees to adhere to the regulations stipulated in Rule 300 (Open Burning Requirements, Prohibitions and Exemptions). A copy of Rule 300 is available on our website or upon request. Some of the changes to the Rule 300 which are as a result of the recent Rule amendments and which affect the agricultural community are:

- The District now permits the use of agricultural fires set for the purpose of removing wood and vegetation debris deposited by floodwaters on agricultural lands provided that the person setting the fire maintains an active agricultural burn permit with the District (and follows the requirements of the permit);
- The burning of containers of agricultural chemicals is allowed, provided that the container is made of predominantly paper; containers made of predominantly plastic may not be burned. Additional requirements apply; contact the District for more information.

Additionally, the following District policies should be noted:

- The total acreage reported on a burn permit is the planted acreage from which the grower will be pruning and burning the prunings from. The acreage is not meant to be the size of the pile of brush to be burned.
- The burning of "industrial" (also known as "post-processing") waste is not allowed. This includes, but is not limited to, the hulls and shells of harvested nuts and rice straw that has been removed from the field.
- The District allows an exemption for the open burning of up to two small (265/70/R17 or smaller) tires (one at a time) at no more than three sites per field to produce a smoke column during the application of restricted materials including Propanil, Phenoxy and certain other herbicides if required by the Butte County Agricultural Commissioner. The District requests that the local fire department and the District be notified prior to ignition. Please contact the District if you have any questions regarding the District's policy regarding this exemption.
- The District is aware of the issues with furniture and debris dumping on farmland. Please note that the burning of this material is strictly prohibited. The District's policy of strict liability, which states that "any person in possession of property or who exercises possessor rights on the property on which any open burning is performed in violation of this Rule is strictly liable for any violation of this Rule," is identified in Rule 300. Please contact the appropriate agency with any concerns regarding how to properly dispose of this material.